



Skin Cancer Testimonials

Parks & Recreation

People Like You Get Skin Cancer



I grew up in a navy family and spent my youth living in various places throughout California, the United States, and the South Pacific. I loved participating in outdoor pursuits like surfing, snorkeling, and camping. During my high school and college years I often lead ski tours, river raft trips, and worked with outdoor events like spring fairs, tournaments, carnivals, and skateboard events.

For nearly 30 years I've had a lot of occupational sun exposure participating in or directing park and recreation activities such as coaching, parks maintenance, beach clean-up, pool supervision, and special events. At age 45 I began noticing slight nose irritations that wouldn't go away. I also experienced whitish spots, dry skin, and other skin problems on my head, face, ears, and arms. After a routine checkup my doctor referred me to a dermatologist who immediately started treating me to remove both pre-cancerous and cancerous lesions.

About 90 spots have been removed from my body with both liquid nitrogen and excision. I'm now much more careful to protect myself from the sun by wearing a broad-brimmed hat, using SPF 50+ sunscreen, seeking shade when sitting outdoors, and replacing T-shirts with long-sleeve shirts. I'm also very concerned that program and maintenance employees, and park & recreation patrons - especially children - be taught to practice sun safety.

– Neil Smart, Director of Community Services, Healdsburg



When I was 34 years old I noticed a small sore on my forehead that would usually bleed after a hot shower and then heal-over with a white, waxy crust. Having a science and health background one would think I'd recognize this classic skin cancer symptom: a sore that doesn't heal. I am Italian and I believed people with dark hair and skin simply didn't get skin cancer.

All my life I had been active outdoors. As a boy I played a lot of football, baseball, and basketball and very much enjoyed swimming. As a man my outdoor interests redirected towards backpacking, cycling, and especially tennis.

After two years of "showering and bleeding" I knew I needed the assessment of a dermatologist. She took one look at the sore on my forehead and said, "This has to go." A biopsy confirmed it was basal cell carcinoma. The sore was removed surgically. My doctor sat me down and said from then on I had to wear a wide-brim hat, long-sleeved shirts, and use sunscreen. I continue to be active and true to my physician's prescription. Most people now only recognize me with my hat on!

– Ken Giannotti, Employee/Recreation Services Manager,
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory





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"I thought it was just a pimple or ingrown hair on my forearm. I let it grow maybe three to four weeks until I decided to lance it myself. By this time it was about the size of a pencil eraser. It was not like any pimple I had ever had before, kind of fleshy inside. I finally went to the doctor and he told me it was either basal or squamous cell carcinoma (skin cancer). I was lucky the cancer was caught early and surgically removed. I will definitely seek medical advice from now on as soon as I suspect a skin growth.

I have spent most of my working career, 20 to 25 years, in the out-of-doors doing highway maintenance. In addition, I have frequently engaged in summer water sports and motorcycle riding."

– Charles Wheeler, CalTrans, Sacramento

Cover up!



"I've worked for CalTrans for over 30 years. I enjoy outdoor recreation and pursuits like fishing and gardening. About 13 years ago I went for a routine medical appointment and told the doctor there was a sore on my neck that would not heal. My doctor referred me to a dermatologist who diagnosed the spot as skin cancer and had it removed. During the following years I developed a new case of skin cancer at least twelve times! The cancers appeared on my face (nose & cheek), neck, chest, back, and waist.

Over 40 medical appointments were required to treat all the episodes of skin cancer. The treatments included excision, freezing (cryosurgery), and drug injection. All those years of exposure to sunlight also reduced my body's immune response such that cuts and scrapes now heal much slower. Ten years ago a letter from my doctor helped get me an indoor job assignment.

When I'm not at work I try to stay indoors during the middle of the day. I also use sunscreen, wear a hat, and long-sleeved shirts when I'm outside. I believe outdoor workers should practice sun safety both on and off the job."

– Gerry Austin, CalTrans, San Diego

